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The Vapheio Cups: One Minoan and One Mycenean?*

Ellen N. Davis

The style of the two gold cups found at Vapheio – whether Minoan or Mycenean – has long been a matter of controversy. The cups (Figs. 1–10) were found in 1888 by Christos Tsountas in an undisturbed pit burial of the Mycenean IIA period in the tholos tomb at Vapheio, near Sparta.¹ Although the skeleton had disintegrated before excavation, the positions of the cups indicated that one was held in each hand of the interred. The burial included a number of objects that have proved to be imported from Crete, a circumstance that leaves the question of the provenance of the cups wide open.² Although the rich repoussé relief decorations of the gold cups, among the most elaborate representations surviving from the Bronze Age, have been widely discussed, experts have been divided as to whether they are Minoan or Mycenean. The problem continues to challenge our basic understanding of the Minoan and Mycenean styles. This article will present a new solution. A contrast of the cups will show that the cup with quiet scenes of bulls being lured and tethered was made by a Minoan artist, whereas that with scenes of the violent capture of bulls was both conceived and executed by a Mycenean artist as a pendant to the Minoan cup.

At the time of their discovery, Tsountas noted differences in the execution of the two cups, but concluded that they were due to the deliberately contrasted subjects.³ In 1894 Georges Perrot, in an extensive discussion, augmented Tsountas's observations and demonstrated convincingly that the cups were executed by two different hands.⁴ He pointed out correctly that on the quiet cup the repoussé relief is deeper and rises more distinctly from the background, and all the edges and surfaces are smoothed to

efface the traces of tooling. On the violent cup, in contrast, the decoration is executed with more superficial incisions, with the relief edges less distinctly separated from the ground, and both the background and relief surfaces retain many tool marks. Perrot's opinion was adopted by Kurt Müller, who in 1915 published the most thorough stylistic analysis of the cups to date.⁵ This attribution to two different artists has been largely ignored, however, in recent literature. But in the excellent photographs by Max Hirmer, reproduced here, the differences in execution can be clearly seen.⁶

First, landscape elements differ markedly on the two cups. For example, the terrain is subdivided into smooth and stippled areas on both, but on the quiet cup the divisions are made by softly undulating lines flowing consistently from lower left to upper right, whereas on the violent cup the subdivisions are tighter smaller units, often vertical or moving upward to the left. On the quiet cup, two large olive trees with spreading branches are represented, with each leaf separately rendered and shown to grow from an organic system of branches. On the violent cup, date palm trees have been substituted, but the two small trees to which the net is tied (Fig. 6) are apparently also olive trees.⁷ Yet with no outer contours, straighter trunks and branches, and sketchy irregular leaves in vague bunches that are unrelated to the branch structure, they seem totally different from those on the quiet cup.

The bulls' anatomy also reveals differences in execution. On the quiet cup all the bulls have rows of hairs growing above the hoofs, on the edges of the ears, and immediately below the horns, rendered in neat rows of locks in serrated

*This study forms part of my doctoral dissertation, "The Vapheio Cups and Aegean Gold and Silver Ware," submitted to New York University in June, 1973. I would like to thank Mr. Richard Huggins, whose initial perceptions led me to my understanding of the Vapheio cups.

¹ The discovery of the tomb was reported in *Archaiologike Ephemeris*, 1888, 197–99, and the finds published in *Archaiologike Ephemeris*, 1889, 125–71, pls. VII–X. For the tholos tomb after a restoration in 1962, see *Bulletin de correspondance hellénique*, LXXXVII, 1963, 764, fig. 9. The finds from the pit should be distinguished from those overlooked by robbers from burials on the floor of the tomb, since the floor burials seem to date slightly later. Pottery from the pit included a cup with ogival canopy decoration which was classified by A. Evans as Late Minoan IB, *The Palace of Minos at Knossos*, London, 4 vols., 1921–1935, II, 489–491, fig. 296Ab, and III, 177, and later reclassified as Mycenean IIA (=Late Helladic II), A. Furumark, *The Chronology of Mycenaean Pottery*, Stockholm, 1941, 49. Pithoid amphoras from the dromos, some fragments of which are in Athens and others in Sparta, M. N. Tod and J. B. Wace, *Catalogue of the Sparta Museum*, Oxford, 1906, 222, include one published by R. C. Bosanquet, "Some 'Late Minoan' Vases Found in Greece," *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, xxiv, 1904, 317–18, pl. XI. Good summaries of the Vapheio finds are given in E. Vermeule, *Greece in the Bronze Age*, Chicago and London, 1964, 127–130, and G. Mylonas, *Mycenae and the Mycenaean Age*, Princeton, 1966, 125–27. For the large collection of gems found see F. Matz, ed., *Corpus der minoischen und mykenischen Siegel*, Berlin, 1964 on, I, Nos. 219–261 and page 252, and J. Younger, "The

Vapheio Gems: A Reconsideration of the Find-Spots," *American Journal of Archaeology*, LXXVII, 1973, 338–340.

² These include stone vases and lamps, P. Warren, *Minoan Stone Vases*, Oxford, 1969, 38, 53; and a bronze spear, S. Marinatos, "Στεφάνη," *Annual of the British School at Athens*, XXXVII, 1936–37, 187–191. While it is generally agreed that a number of the seals are Minoan, exactly which ones remain to be determined; cf. V. Kenna, *Cretan Seals*, Oxford, 1960, 52–55; E. Vermeule in *Art Bulletin*, XLIII, 1961, 244; J. Betts in *American Journal of Archaeology*, LXX, 1966, 368–69; V. Kenna in *American Journal of Archaeology*, LXXI, 1967, 409–410. The large bronze brazier of a type common in Minoan pottery, *Archaiologike Ephemeris*, 1889, 159, pl. VIII, 10, now has a close counterpart in a decorated example from Kato Zakro, N. Platon, *Zakro*, New York, 1971, 217–18.

³ *Archaiologike Ephemeris*, 1889, 160–63.

⁴ G. Perrot and C. Chipiez, *Histoire de l'art dans l'antiquité*, Paris, 1894, VI, 784–794.

⁵ "Frühmykenische Reliefs aus Kreta und von griechischen Festland," *Jahrbuch des Instituts*, XXX, 1915, 329.

⁶ For larger versions of the photographs, see S. Marinatos and M. Hirmer, *Crete and Mycenae*, New York, n.d., pls. 178–185.

⁷ They are identified as olives in all descriptions; cf. also H. Möbius, "Pflanzenbilder der minoischen Kunst in botanischer Bebrachtung," *Jahrbuch des Instituts*, XLVIII, 1933, 13.

patterns. These are either omitted on the violent bulls or sketched in so lightly as to be barely visible. At first glance, the most similar forms on the two cups are the two bulls' heads shown frontally. A closer look, however (Figs. 8 and 9), reveals that on the quiet bull the hairs growing over the muzzle are rendered as individual locks in raised relief, while on the violent bull they are light surface scratches, loosely sketched. The head of the quiet bull is a system of clearly thought-out parts, such as the three-banded muscles over the eyes; these forms are only loosely approximated on the violent bull.

The same contrast applies to the human figures. The man who tethers the bull on the quiet cup (Fig. 10) is a clearly rendered version of a conventional Minoan figure-type. He resembles especially the fighting figures on the Late Minoan IB Boxer Rhyton from Hagia Triada (Fig. 11).⁸ Proportions, hair, garment, stance, and anatomy are similar, even to such characteristic details as the curved triangle descending down into the belt that renders the thorax, and the medial line of the chest set askew, but to the wrong side, away from the center of the legs. The human figures on the violent cup (Fig. 12) are difficult to compare because of their capsized positions, but their bodies, unlike the tetherer's, do not present the Minoan anatomical conventions. Instead, the striations along the legs and arms and the bulges on the chest and shoulder of the falling man only loosely suggest muscles and bones. The outstretched fingers of the falling man are particularly rough compared with the neat cylindrical fingers of the tetherer, whose hands presented a more complex problem. The upside-down man on the horns is exceptionally difficult to read,⁹ in contrast to the clarity of the tetherer. If, as it seems, his left arm crosses over his body to grasp the bull by its right ear, a lumpy form to the left of his belt remains an enigma, and his right arm is wholly unaccounted for. The organic unity of the body is broken here; the left leg and head are dissociated from the torso, and all the body parts are arranged at sharp angles. Whereas the tetherer corresponds closely to the fighters on the Boxer Rhyton, this angular overturned figure stands in sharp contrast to the flexible, rubbery bull-vaulter on the second register of the Rhyton (Fig. 13).

Clearly, the cups were executed by two different craftsmen. The master of the quiet cup achieves a high degree of finish. He forms convex figures with smooth glossy surfaces, primarily by hammering from inside, and defines them with clear linear contours. The master of the violent cup works in a sketchy, more direct manner, relying much more on exterior chasing to define the forms. His figures are not set off from the ground by clear contours; their broken edges are simply the result of the inner hammering. He produces choppier, more agitated surfaces that catch the

light in flame-like flickers. The result is an insistent surface effect that contrasts with the more three-dimensional modeling of the figures on the quiet cup.

In execution the cups differ, but what about the designs? Even those who have noted the difference in execution have concluded that both cups were planned by one artist. Perrot's view that one master designed both cups was based on compositional similarities.¹⁰ He believed the master to be the artist of the violent cup, who then left the easier task of executing the quiet cup to a pupil. Müller, relying on an analysis of the compositions made by Riegl,¹¹ agreed, believing it unlikely that the influence of a master on a pupil could extend to principles of composition.¹² He did point out a number of compositional differences, but he attributed them to a deliberate attempt to contrast the scenes. A closer look at the compositions (Figs. 14 and 17), however, reveals that basically different conceptions are behind them. It is these different conceptions that reveal most clearly the distinction between the Minoan and Mycenaean styles.

A major distinction lies in the decorative approach to the cup as an object. On the quiet cup, the representation forms an overall decoration that covers the surface without regard for boundaries. The handle has been placed, almost as an afterthought, over the rear leg and tail of the sniffing bull (Fig. 20). The tethered bull stretches his head behind the handle, and the pattern formed by the bulls' legs continues uninterrupted beneath it. This continuous treatment of the cylindrical surface shows a basic feeling for the cup as a three-dimensional object. On the violent cup, in contrast, double-edged borders mark the lip and base. The handles were attached last on both cups, after the repoussé decorations were completed and separate inner linings set in. But on the violent cup the handle was planned in advance as an essential point of division. Two date palms were designed to receive it; their lower trunks complete its vertical division of the cup, while their upper trunks bend to leave room for its attachment (Fig. 21). The artist of the violent cup has thereby broken the continuity of surface and conceived it as a flat rectangular panel. His first consideration was to define and augment the limits of that panel with the borders and the trees, that is, to provide a frame.

This notion of a framed flat panel is further reinforced by the placement of the netted bull exactly opposite the handle, where it forms a central focus for the composition (Fig. 17). The coiled-up bull constitutes a self-contained, almost regular circle, with the head curving up toward the net above. The medallion-like character of the motif is reinforced by the rope of the net that traces out the bull's circular contour. This is achieved at the expense of logic, since a real net of this construction would have no such rope. From this central circle the other two bulls thrust outward.

⁸ Warren, *Minoan Stone Vases*, 85, P496; Marinatos, *Crete and Mycenae*, pls. 106–107; S. Alexiou et al., *Ancient Crete*, New York and Washington, 1968, pl. 132.

⁹ Evans has identified the figure as a girl, *Palace of Minos*, III, 182 and n.4, because of the more luxuriant locks of hair at the front, which indeed are lacking on the man who falls with his hands outstretched. But the male tetherer has the front locks of hair, as do all the figures on the Boxer Rhyton including the bull-vaulter, so it is unlikely that the fringe of curls distinguishes sex in Minoan art. The inconsistency in treatment of the hair on the violent cup and a similar inconsistency in the

rendering of the ankle bindings suggest the artist's inexperience.

¹⁰ *Histoire de l'art*, VI, 789–793.

¹¹ A. Riegl, "Zur kunsthistorischen Stellung der Becher von Vafio," *Jahreshefte des österreichischen archäologischen Instituts*, IX, 1906, 1–19; the analysis is based chiefly on the way compositional elements are balanced; for example, on each cup the bull to the left of the center moves upward, while the bull to the right of center moves downward.

¹² "Frühmykenische Reliefs," 329.



1 Sniffing bull, "Quiet" cup from Vapheio. Athens, National Museum (courtesy Hirmer Fotoarchiv München)



3 Man tethering bull, "Quiet" cup from Vapheio. Athens, National Museum (courtesy Hirmer Fotoarchiv München)



2 Cow and bull, "Quiet" cup from Vapheio. Athens, National Museum (courtesy Hirmer Fotoarchiv München)



4 Captured bull, "Quiet" cup from Vapheio. Athens, National Museum (courtesy Hirmer Fotoarchiv München)



5 Leaping bull, "Violent" cup from Vapheio. Athens, National Museum (courtesy Hirmer Fotoarchiv München)



6 Bull in net, "Violent" cup from Vapheio. Athens, National Museum (courtesy Hirmer Fotoarchiv München)



7 Charging bull, "Violent" cup from Vapheio. Athens, National Museum (courtesy Hirmer Fotoarchiv München)



8 Bull's head (detail of Fig. 2)



9 Bull's head (detail of Fig. 12)



10 Tetherer, "Quiet" cup from Vapheio. Athens, National Museum (courtesy Hirmer Fotoarchiv München)

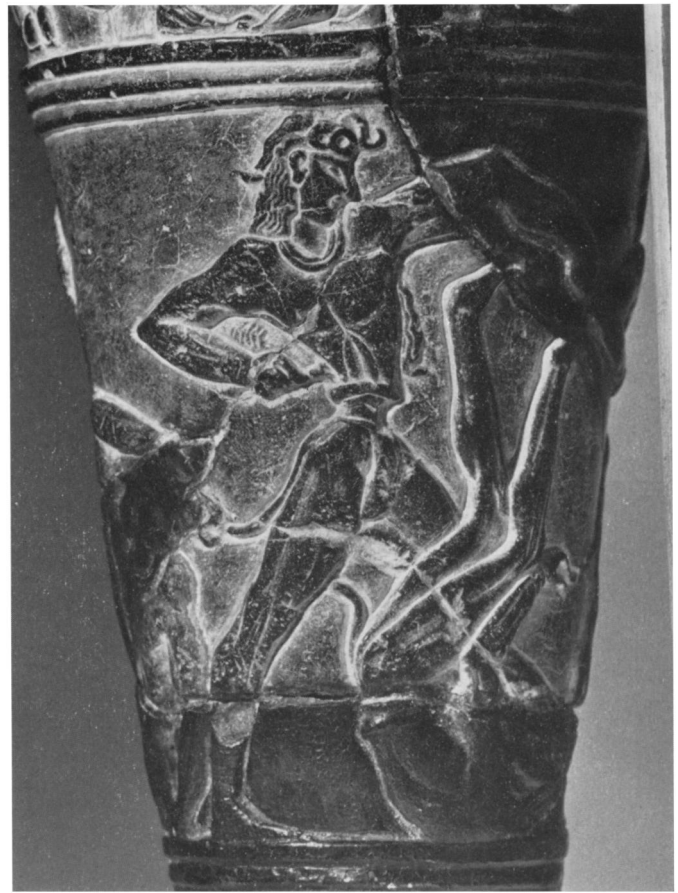
The charging bull emerges from behind the net, which overlaps his hind legs, and his back continues the line of the netted bull's spine. The hind legs of the leaping bull to the right are raised to an unlikely height, so that they continue the upper line of the net. This basically abstract layout resembles a triple running spiral, with the bodies of the two side bulls forming tangential links to the coils implied by the movements of their heads and shoulders. Friedrich Matz has pointed out this spiral-form design of the composition, and based on it an argument for the Minoan character of the design.¹³ Here the spiral is not, however, an innate expression of Minoan "torsion"; it is a design based deliberately on an abstract pattern. The Minoans had no monopoly on the running spiral; it is the single most common ornament in the Shaft Graves of Mycenae.¹⁴ The Shaft Graves also provide parallels for the adaptation of a naturalistic motif to an inherently abstract design. The most extreme case is the sword pommel from Shaft Grave IV, on which four lions are forced into a whirligig.¹⁵

¹³ *The Art of Crete and Early Greece*, New York, 1962, 127–29.

¹⁴ G. Karo, *Die Schachtgräber von Mykenai*, Munich, 1930, 272.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, No. 295, pls. LXXV–LXXVIII.

¹⁶ Harvesters Rhyton: Warren, *Minoan Stone Vases*, 88; Marinatos, *Crete and Mycenae*, pls. 103–05. Sanctuary Rhyton: Warren, *Minoan Stone Vases*, 87, P484; N. Platon, *Crete*, Cleveland, 1966, pls. 47–48; Alexiou, *Ancient Crete*, pls. 192–94; its attachment holes have not been discussed,



11 Helmeted boxer, Boxer Rhyton from Hagia Triada. Heraklion Museum (courtesy Hirmer Fotoarchiv München)

The composition of the quiet cup on the other hand, with the surface treated as a continuous frieze, has its parallels in Crete. The Harvesters Rhyton, the Sanctuary Rhyton from Kato Zakro, and the Boxer Rhyton, among the few complete examples of carved stone vases from Crete, attest to the popularity of this kind of design among the Minoans.¹⁶ The last two rhyta, like the quiet cup, had handles or attachments placed on top of the figures. Cretan frescoes also show the Minoan predilection for continuous friezes, which often do not stop even for the corners of the room (Fig. 22).¹⁷

The basic approach of the Greek Mainland, however, is to seek limitations in the shape of the object. This can be seen in its most fundamental application in Middle Helladic matt-painted ware, such as the kantharos from Lerna, whose decoration is nothing but an analysis of the structure into geometric parts.¹⁸ This approach continues to characterize Mycenaean pottery decoration even when the Mycenaeans are copying Minoan designs. The classic illustration is provided by the series of Late Minoan IB

but are visible in the photographs.

¹⁷ M. Cameron, "Unpublished Paintings from the 'House of the Frescoes' at Knossos," *Annual of the British School at Athens*, LXIII, 1968, 1–31. Many of the new frescoes from Thera show Minoan influence in this regard; S. Marinatos, *Excavations at Thera*, Athens, 1971, iv, col. pls. A–C; 1972, v, col. pls. D–F.

¹⁸ *Hesperia*, xxvi, 1957, pl. 43b; Vermeule, *Greece in the Bronze Age*, pl. IXa.



12 Figure on horns, "Violent" cup from Vapheio. Athens, National Museum (courtesy Hirmer Fotoarchiv München)



13 Bull-Leaper, Boxer Rhyton from Hagia Triada. Heraklion Museum (courtesy Hirmer Fotoarchiv München)

octopus vases and their Mycenaean transformations.¹⁹ On Minoan vases like the Gournia stirrup jar,²⁰ the naturalistic octopus is shown swimming in an easy motion that covers most of the surface of the vase in an all-over decoration of curves. One octopus tentacle winds casually under the handle. When Mainland vase painters imitate the style in the Late Helladic II period, the decorative grace and natural movement of the octopus are subordinated to the structural dictates of the vase. On the Palace style jar from Prosymna,²¹ the octopus is placed vertically, midway between the handles, with its tentacles arranged symmetrically on either side. Its body is unnaturally elongated to form a vertical axis of the base, an ironic fate for the largest invertebrate. It no longer swims around the whole surface, but occupies the center of a field limited by black zones articulating the neck, handles, and base. On another marine style vase from Kakovatos,²² thick black lines join the vertical tiers of handles to further confine the marine life. The Mycenaean artist clearly began with this abstract frame, and then fitted the marine life into it. This approach differs

fundamentally from that of the Minoan painter, who began with the octopus itself and developed it freely in terms of its own movement.²³

The free development of the figures can be seen on the quiet cup from Vapheio. Its layout is not at all geometrical (Fig. 14). Instead, the three scenes casually divide the surface into three parts. Instead of division, continuity of the surface is stressed by the continuous movement of the figures in the same direction to the left, a movement balanced by the opposite flow of the terrain lines. This particularly Minoan habit of balancing a flow of figures with a counter-movement has been discussed by Henrietta Grönewegen-Frankfort, who points to the way the forks on the Harvesters Rhyton balance the movement of the harvesters.²⁴ On the quiet cup the indications of separate scenes are made subtly, one by the vertical division of the spreading olive tree, and the other by the movement of the decoy cow's head to the right, which interrupts the flow of the figures and leaves an empty vertical space to her left. These divisions are minimized, however, by the movements of the

¹⁹ These are discussed by T. L. Shear, "Minoan Influence on the Mainland: Variations of Opinion since 1900," *A Land Called Crete* (Smith College Studies in History, 45), Northampton, 1968, 53–54, and n. 17.

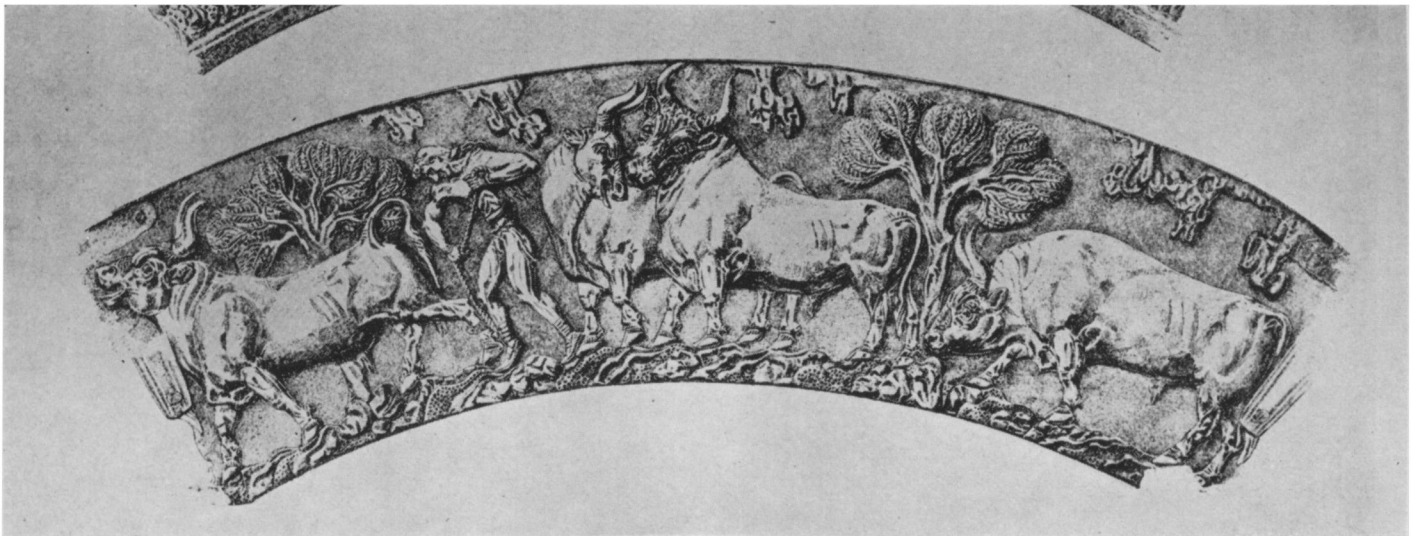
²⁰ H. Hawes, *Gournia*, Philadelphia, 1908, pl. H.

²¹ C. Blegen, *Prosymna*, Cambridge, 1937, 417, pl. VII, and fig. 437.

²² Marinatos, *Crete and Mycenae*, pl. 227.

²³ Framing as a Mycenaean characteristic has been noted by Matz, *Crete and Early Greece*, 162, 167; the lack of framing in Minoan art has been noted by F. Schachermeyr, "Die szenen Komposition der minoischen Bildkunst und ihre Bedeutung für die Beurteilung der altkretischen Kultur," *Kretika Chronika*, xv–xvi, 1961–62, 183.

²⁴ *Arrest and Movement*, London, 1951, 199–200.



14 Composition of the "Quiet" cup from Vapheio (from Evans, *Palace of Minos*, III, fig. 123,B)

figures: the sniffing bull provides a transition past the olive tree; the tetherer shares the same spot of ground with the decoy cow and moves into his scene with a motion complementary to hers; and the tethered bull stretches his head behind the handle into the sniffing bull's space. The photographer, Max Hirmer, has instinctively understood this difference between the cups: four views illustrate the quiet cup, two at points of transition (Figs. 1–4), while only three photographs illustrate the three obvious views of the violent cup (Figs. 5–7).

The handle of the quiet cup does provide the starting point for the development of the scenes, however, since it marks the beginning of a sequence. As Evans was the first to recognize, the scenes present a narrative sequence if they are viewed from right to left the way the figures move, beginning from the handle (Fig. 14).²⁵ This progression is designed for the drinker who holds the cup in his right hand, and is then naturally presented with the first scene. The sniffing bull's action is explained in the second scene by the excited decoy cow, identified by her raised tail, which indicates sexual excitement.²⁶ She is working her charms on the hesitant victim, who is shown again in the final scene, excited, caught and bellowing his protest, a victim of his desire. This interpretation presupposes that the same bull is shown at three different moments in time, that is, in true continuous narration. If so, the quiet cup may provide the first known occurrence of continuous narration in ancient art. For this reason, one might doubt whether the same bull is represented in each scene. However, similarly ambiguous cases occur on contemporary Minoan seals, and clear cases of continuous narration occur in other civilizations

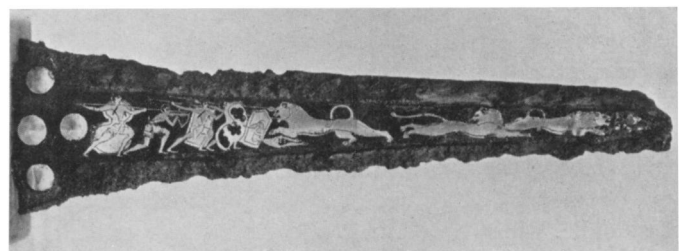
²⁵ *Palace of Minos*, III, 182–85.

²⁶ A. Körte, "Zu den Bechern von Vafio," *Jahreshefte des österreichischen archäologischen Instituts*, IX, 1906, 294–95; Evans, *Palace of Minos*, III, 183, n. 1.

²⁷ R. Amiran, "A Seal from Brak: Expression of Consecutive Movements in Late Minoan Glyptic," *Iraq*, XVIII, 1956, 57–59, interprets the animals on seals as shown in continuous narration. In a special "Symposium on Narration in the Ancient World," *American Journal of Archaeology*, LXI, 1957, where Minoan art was not discussed, the first cases of



15 Ivory Pyxis from Katsamba, drawing of composition (from Alexiou, *Taphoi*, pl. 33,B)



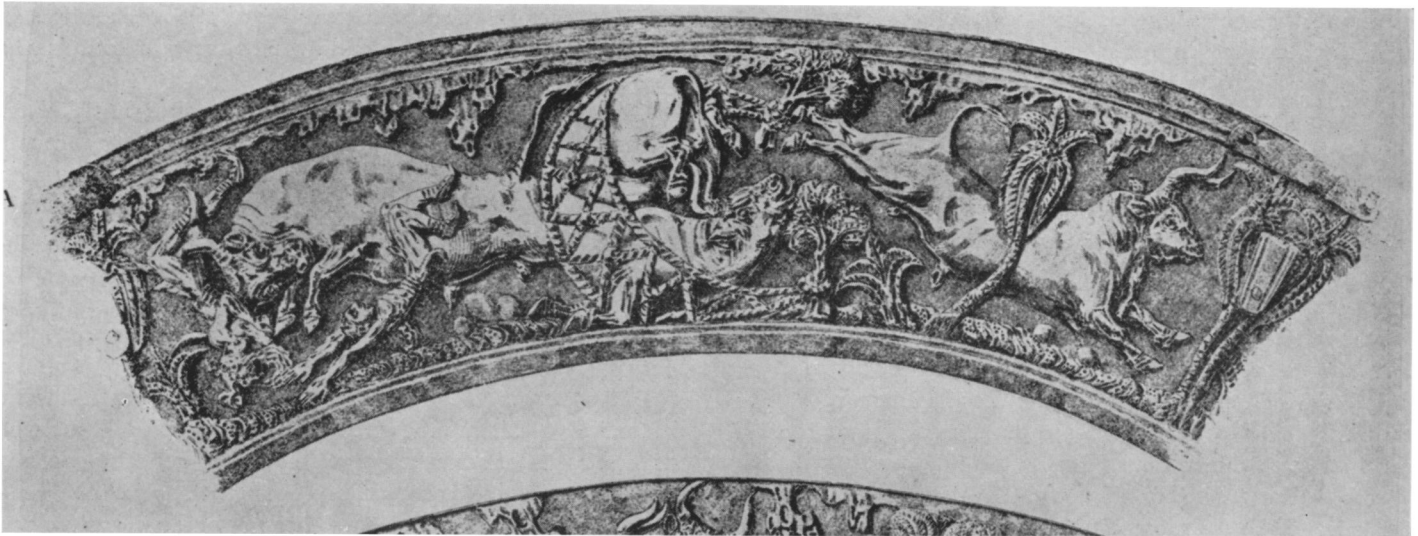
16 Lion Hunt Dagger from Mycenae. Athens National Museum (from Matz, *Art of Crete and Early Greece*, pl. 41)

beginning in the fourteenth century, so the question should remain open.²⁷ As an alternative, the scenes may be read as illustrating three different bulls in three separate moments of the entrapment.²⁸ This kind of depiction would be similar to that of the Toreador fresco from Knossos, in which two successive moments of bull-leaping are illustrated with a female and male figure.²⁹ In either case, a temporal sequence is intended.

continuous narration cited occur on an Egyptian tomb from the end of the 18th Dynasty in the reign of Ai (page 47), on an altar of the Assyrian King Tukulti-Ninurta I (1242–1206 B.C.) and on two reliefs from Malatya (pages 64–65).

²⁸ This interpretation does not really destroy the dramatic ensemble as Evans maintained, *Palace of Minos*, III, 183, n. 1.

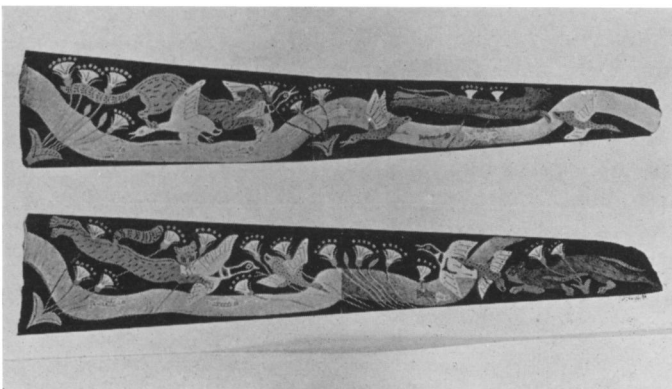
²⁹ Marinatos, *Crete and Mycenae*, pl. xxviii. The third figure does not represent a third stage of the leaping, since she faces the bull and the leaping man will land with his back to it.



17 Composition of the "Violent" cup from Vapheio (from Evans, *Palace of Minos*, III, fig. 123A)



18 Composition of Ivory Pyxis from the Agora, Athens (from Immerwahr, *Agora*, XIII, pl. 32)



19 Leopard Dagger from Mycenae. Athens, National Museum (from Smith, *Interconnections*, fig. 105, a)

Evans believed that the artist of the two Vapheio cups reproduced a monumental narrative cycle executed in painted molded plaster on the porches flanking the north entrance to the Palace at Knossos.³⁰ This is most unlikely, however, since the wall of the east bastion did not correspond to the wall of the west bastion on which the frescoes were painted.³¹ Also, the violent Vapheio cup does not provide a corresponding narrative sequence that would carry out the supposed cycle. The fresco fragments from the north entrance passage include bare female legs and a fragment of a male arm along with bull fragments, all of which suggest a standard bull-vaulting scene. The only unusual feature they share with the Vapheio cups is the presence of rocky terrain and olive trees indicating an outdoor setting.³² If the Cretan bull-vaulting took place in the central courts – by no means a certainty³³ – the outdoor scene at Knossos may have shown preliminary bull-catching. In any case, there is no evidence that a peaceful scene like that on the quiet cup was represented there.³⁴ Although perfectly suited for a little drinking cup, the scenes on the quiet cup have a light, anecdotal quality which seems inappropriate for a monumental representation.

There is no such temporal sequence on the violent cup, however (Fig. 17). The two side bulls thrust away from the center in opposite directions; so their movement does not contribute to viewing the scenes in a sequence. Although the scenes seem related to one another functionally, with the bull-catchers working to enrage the bull (the figure on the horns twists its ear) so that it will rush blindly into the net,³⁵ there is no indication of a temporal development. The escaping bull is an alternative rather than a

³⁰ *Palace of Minos*, III, 167–91.

³¹ W. Woodward, "The North Entrance at Knossos," *American Journal of Archaeology*, LXXVI, 1972, 122 and ill. 3, page 121.

³² *Palace of Minos*, III, 166–67, 171, figs. 109B, 110, and 115.

³³ This theory has been formulated by J. Graham, *The Palaces of Crete*, Princeton, 1962, 73–83; and A. Ward, "The Cretan Bull Sports," *Antiquity*, XLII, 1968, 117–22. Objections are cited by S. Hood in *American Journal of Archaeology*, LVIII, 1964, 309. Earlier, Evans raised the question of where the spectators could have been accommodated, *Palace of Minos*,

III, 224, n. 1.

³⁴ Evans assigned only two fragments from bull's legs to the east side of the entrance, *Palace of Minos*, III, 176–77. It is dubious whether find spots would have allowed him to distinguish these from the remaining fresco fragments along such a narrow corridor.

³⁵ This interpretation, given by Matz, *Crete and Early Greece*, 130, is borne out by the more explicit action on the gold seal from Rutsi, *Corpus*, I, No. 274; Marinatos, *Crete and Mycenae*, pl. 209 below.

sequel to the central scene. The way the netted bull overlaps the charging bull's legs, as well as the way it and the fleeing bull share the same area, prevents any interpretation of these as the same bull shown in successive moments. In one respect, however, the scenes do develop from right to left – in mounting excitement. The person who holds the cup sees the least exciting scene first: the leaping bull. Then, turning the cup around, he sees the netted bull flailing against the net. Last, he views the most sensational and climactic scene: the charging bull.

Minoan art is unique in its representations of figures in rare moments of movement, such as the roebuck from Hagia Triada, which has just begun its leap.³⁶ Such representations reveal a continuous sense of movement that can be arrested at subtle instants. This is the notion of time conveyed by the quiet Vapheio cup. The Mycenaeans, on the other hand, had a more dramatic sense of time and liked action at its climactic point. The netted bull is shown at an extreme point in his flailing, furiously reacting to his capture. The charging bull carries this taste for drama even further, for he upsets two men at once to double the climax. This characteristically Mycenaean feature occurs also on the leopard hunting dagger from Shaft Grave V: one leopard sinks his teeth and claws into two birds at the same time, and each of the four leopards takes on two ducks at once (Fig. 19).³⁷ Although the charging bull on the Vapheio cup does not actually gore the man on the horns, the viewer must look very closely to see whether this is the most sensational goring in Aegean art or the narrowest of escapes.³⁸

Another element that differs on the two cups is the treatment of space. On the quiet cup, the continuous terrain and the spreading olive trees provide a convincing landscape setting. This is another feature that relates the cup to the Minoan tradition, which is celebrated for its interest in landscape.³⁹ The artist of the quiet cup was in fact especially concerned with the setting: he has produced an unusual side view with clouds above the figures. Although the forms hanging down from the upper border have usually been regarded as terrain continuing behind the scene, they are surely clouds.⁴⁰ The clearest indication is that they are not subdivided into smooth and stippled areas, which would be the obvious way to indicate their continuity in the repoussé technique. Actually, even the smooth areas of the terrain are subdivided into tooled sections in a manner that differs from the softer modeling of the upper forms. Also, the upper forms occur in discrete globular units, in contrast to the level terrain line. And forms above the decoy cow disappear behind the tree, never to emerge

(Figs. 1 and 2), suggesting their more ethereal nature. Is there any way the artist could have conveyed more clearly that these are clouds?

One reason that these forms are usually regarded as distant terrain is that similar forms occur on other Minoan representations considered to be presented in "cavalier perspective."⁴¹ The high viewpoint is by no means universal in Minoan art, however. On frescoes of landscape friezes, decorative upper borders closely repeat the forms of the terrain below, and sometimes the two are shown connected (Fig. 22). But here the undulating terrain lines may represent mountain scenery viewed head-on, rather than from a bird's-eye view. On the Sanctuary Rhyton from Kato Zakro, where mountain terrain rises up to fill most of the surface, the rocky forms terminate before the upper edge, and birds are seen presumably against the sky. The preserved bedroom fresco from Thera provides a very clear case: undulating landscape covers the bottom of the field only, with the top left light and airy. Another example of terrain appearing only below the figures occurs on the back of the lion hunt dagger from Mycenae.⁴² These representations testify to the existence of alternatives to "cavalier perspective" in Aegean art.

As for the clouds themselves, their appearance on the quiet cup from Vapheio may be unique. Aegean art does provide a few ambiguous candidates for clouds in decorative forms surrounding birds. On the swallow "kymbe" from Thera, the scallops are the same as those surrounding dolphins on a similar vessel, where they are presumably waves. On a third vessel they surround horses and crocuses grow from them, clearly indicating terrain.⁴³ The decorative use of these forms as filling ornaments complicates the case. When ornamentation is the primary aim, it can override any representational concern and produce forms with no specific naturalistic reference. This may be the case also with the bird goblet from Midea Dendra.⁴⁴ Here, birds are shown from below flying in front of a modeled background suggestive of clouds. But since birds may be viewed against terrain in Minoan art, as on the Katsamba pyxis (Fig. 15) and on the fresco with bluebirds (Fig. 22), and since on the Dendra goblet vegetation forms hang from above, the modeled forms remain ambiguous. A similar difficulty prevents sure identification of the forms accompanying the birds on a dagger from Prosymna.⁴⁵ On the quiet cup from Vapheio, however, representation is the primary aim. Although the upper forms do function casually as decorative filler, two of these occur above the head of the tetherer, even though this leaves much empty space (Fig. 10). This

³⁶ W. Smith, *Interconnections in the Ancient Near East*, New Haven and London, 1965, fig. 100.

³⁷ Marinatos, *Crete and Mycenae*, pls. xxxv and xxxvii; Karo, *Schachtgräber*, pls. xciii, xciv.

³⁸ Shear, "Minoan Influence," 48, and S. Hood, *Home of the Heroes: The Aegean before the Greeks*, London and New York, 1957, 104, have read the scene as a goring.

³⁹ Smith, *Interconnections*, 63–68.

⁴⁰ W. Schiering, "Die Goldbecher von Vaphio," *Antike Welt*, II, 1971, 3–10, follows Riegl in interpreting the forms as clouds.

⁴¹ The term is discussed by Smith, *Interconnections*, 63. For bibliography on the interpretation of the upper layers as background terrain in Minoan

art, see W. Schiering, "Steine und Malerei in der minoische Kunst," *Jahrbuch des Instituts*, LXXV, 1960, 28, n. 29, and especially the extensive discussion by O. Walter, "Studie ein Blumen Motiv als Beitrag zur Frage der kretisch-mykenischen Perspektive," *Jahreshefte des österreichischen archäologischen Instituts*, XXXVIII, 1950, 17–41.

⁴² Platon, *Crete*, pls. 47–48; Marinatos, *Thera*, IV, pls. A–C; *idem*, *Crete and Mycenae*, pl. xxxvi above. If the lower part of the Harvesters Rhyton were preserved, it would probably provide another such case.

⁴³ Marinatos, *Thera*, V, pl. C, 7 and 8; *Athens Annals of Archaeology*, V, 1972, 448–449, figs. 5 and 6.

⁴⁴ A. Persson, *New Tombs at Dendra near Midea*, Lund, 1942, frontis., fig. 99, 4, and pl. VI; Vermeule, *Greece in the Bronze Age*, pl. xx,a.

⁴⁵ Blegen, *Prosymna*, 331–332, figs. 458–459, pl. II.

shows that they are representational and not just filler ornament.

Minoan art does, therefore, have a tradition of showing terrain below and sky above, and may include other examples of clouds. On the other hand, the artist of the quiet cup may have been an innovator in his landscape representation. One sign of this possibility is the awkwardness with which the figures are related to the terrain. Perhaps for clarity, or perhaps for consistency (so the landscape is seen from the side as well as the figures), he has set his figures on top of the terrain rather than in it. This has led to difficulty in placing figures behind others. In order to place the two olive trees behind the figures, he has slightly raised the level of the ground from which they grow (Figs. 1 and 4). And, similarly, so as to place the decoy cow convincingly behind the bull, he has raised her hooves mostly off the ground, so that she appears to float (Fig. 2). The result, however, is not inconsistent with other Minoan representations, which are often vague in locating figures precisely in space.⁴⁶

On the violent cup, on the other hand, this achievement of a plausible landscape setting is abolished at a single stroke by the olive trees to which the net is tied (Fig. 6). One is placed high on the field. Is the terrain tilted forward so that the upper tree is to be understood as behind the lower one seen in "cavalier perspective"? Or has the little tree been uprooted by the bull's furious thrashing? In either case, the impossibly small size of the trees destroys their effectiveness in providing a plausible setting. They serve instead to underscore the power and violence of the struggling bull. The artist could have maintained a convincing landscape setting by placing two full-size trees on the terrain, with the bull in the net between them – but how much of the violent effect would be lost! His small trees work with the impossible contortion of the bull, whose hind legs are twisted around one hundred and eighty degrees, to convey a radical upheaval. In both cases naturalism is sacrificed for expressive purposes. The landscape is further disrupted by the disappearance of the terrain below the netted bull as if it is sinking beneath its force, another device that serves to dramatize its power. In its contorted position, the bull barely fits within the confines of the cup. Even the borders are brought into play to constrict it, for in its struggle it threatens to explode them. The little tree has already broken through.

Another element that destroys the spatial setting on the violent cup is the much stronger sense of *horror vacui* displayed by the landscape elements (Fig. 17). The cloud shapes conform much more strictly to the upper contours of the figures than on the quiet cup. They are not given as individual units, but instead as a single mass that lines the entire upper border except for the area just above the handles. Here, one is less certain that the upper forms were intended as clouds, for their abstract use as space-filler is much more important. Whether the artist understood them as clouds or not, the clinging upper forms impose

on the scene with a heavy, oppressive effect, in contrast to the airy lightness of the quiet cup. From below, the two young date-palm shoots and the smooth stones augment the rising and falling terrain to provide the same restrictive contour. This strong sense of *horror vacui* is a Mycenaean element, illustrated by the gold plaques on the hexagonal box from Shaft Grave V.⁴⁷ On the plaques, the motifs completely pack the surface, leaving no space at all, and the individual plant motifs convey a sense of setting only abstractly. At the same time, in Matz's words, "the borders give the impression of being thrust outward by their fillings."⁴⁸ The marine-style amphora from Kakovatos illustrates this Mycenaean propensity at work on a Minoan motif.⁴⁹ The finicky way the filler elements line the bands and conform to the contours of the argonauts contrasts with Minoan examples, on which the more casual decoration is like that of the quiet cup.

The artist of the violent cup has used landscape elements not only as space-fillers, but as forces brought to play against the figures. The charging bull appears to collide with the upside-down figure on his horns; the figure's abrupt vertical placement and shattered outline suggest the shock of the impact (Fig. 12). Although the bull does not actually gore the man, the sharp horns *visually* pierce him and go through to strike the palm trees by the handle. The feet and arms of the falling man in front of the bull cut into the landscape elements above and below. In fact, the entire composition is filled with elements that bump into one another unnecessarily. The scenes are thus permeated with tiny impacts that charge them with excitement. This, too, contrasts with the quiet cup, on which the motifs are more gracefully arranged.

One factor governing the arrangement of the figures on the quiet cup is the care the artist has taken to present each of the three bulls in its entirety, with nothing allowed to disturb its outlines (Fig. 14). This stands in striking contrast to the violent cup, where extra elements overlap and subdivide the bodies of all three bulls: the flying man, the net, and most obviously and deliberately, the unstable date palm tree that cuts across the body of the leaping bull (Fig. 17). This tendency to subdivide the figures and overlap elements is another characteristic of Mycenaean style. It can be seen on the leopard dagger from Shaft Grave V (Fig. 19), where the leopard, the ducks, the papyrus plants, and even one of the fish are overlapped and intertwined, subdivided by each other. The overlapping on the dagger disturbs not only the figures, but also the spatial setting. The papyrus plants grow from the bottom, yet they weave behind the leopards and leave them dislocated in space. The result is that all the figures are bound to the surface in a linear network. Another result of this Mycenaean disposition to interweave figures is the tendency to cut off parts of figures, often hind parts. On the violent cup the hind legs of the charging bull disappear behind the netted bull; on the gold plaques from Shaft Grave V, the body of the attacked stag disappears behind the lion. In

⁴⁶ Groenewegen-Frankfort, *Arrest and Movement*, 196.

⁴⁷ Marinatos, *Crete and Mycenae*, pls. 198–99; Matz, *Crete and Early Greece*, pl. 46.

⁴⁸ Matz, *Crete and Early Greece*, 174.

⁴⁹ Marinatos, *Crete and Mycenae*, pl. 227.

these cases an insistent linear continuity overcomes naturalistic aims. These characteristics relate Mycenaean art to the "Animal Style," the widespread style found primarily in migratory art, that combines abstract linear movement with animal vitality.⁵⁰ Minoan art, which deals with shape rather than line, lies wholly outside this tradition.

The particular treatments of time and space on the Mycenaean cup serve in many ways to heighten the violence. The violence itself corresponds to Mycenaean and not to Minoan taste. The subject of the cup has often been called a hunt, and although no weapons are being used, the scenes have the essential element that the Mycenaean enjoy in their hunting scenes: conflict. It is frequently remarked that this favorite subject of the Mycenaean is almost totally lacking in Minoan art. Most Minoan hunting scenes occur on seals without excavated contexts and, as Schachermeyr has suggested, may date from after the Late Minoan IB destruction of Crete, when the Mycenaean seem to have installed themselves at Knossos, and the effect of their taste can be seen on Minoan art.⁵¹

This must surely be the case with the ivory pyxis from a Late Minoan IIIA tomb at Katsamba carved with a representation of a bull hunt (Fig. 15).⁵² Although the pyxis has been taken to verify the Minoan origin of the violent cup from Vapheio,⁵³ in fact it illustrates the incompatibility of this kind of subject with Minoan style. The artist had great difficulties in adapting the subject to the traditional Minoan continuous frieze. The continuity of the composition leaves no place to divide the scene, so the flat restoration drawing must arbitrarily separate the bull from his tail. Although the base and lid of the pyxis were made separately, the representation evidently continued over them, heedless of their structural division, and also heedless of the four holes for attaching the lid. The flying bird emphasizes the general movement of the figures from right to left, like that of the quiet cup from Vapheio. The movement is broken only by the upper bodies of the fleeing hunters, who turn toward the bull. The spear-carrier's running posture with feet in the air puts him in an awkward position for thrusting the spear behind him. His twisted position removes all force from the thrust and weakens his attack – which is further weakened by the bull-leaper, whose presence is puzzling in a hunting scene, where he only gets in the way.

The major element missing from the hunt on the Katsamba pyxis is force, an element generally lacking in

Minoan art. It is also absent in Minoan fighting scenes, which are usually boxing matches. How these are dealt with is illustrated on the Boxer Rhyton (Fig. 11). Instead of depicting the fighters in actual conflict, the artist has represented the individual combats a moment before or a moment after they are won and thereby has avoided any contact between the figures. The strength of the victors is implied only by the rigid positions of their bodies, in contrast to their rubbery defeated opponents. The motif used for the victors is repeated on the lower two zones in a fashion that is curiously mechanical for Minoan art,⁵⁴ and its recurrence in other Minoan boxing scenes⁵⁵ suggests that Minoan art was not rich in its vocabulary of fighting figures.⁵⁶ The new fresco from Thera with the boys boxing shows similar positions, with the figures bending backward from the waist.⁵⁷ The Thera artist seems to have been especially concerned with conveying force. The boy on the right is just connecting a blow, while his opponent with eyes rolled upward⁵⁸ and slightly paler face, shows that he has felt its impact. But these are rather subtle means, and the graceful curvilinear figures who do not thrust forward convey little real energy. In contrast, the seals from the Shaft Graves reveal the completely different attitude of the Mycenaean, who delight in violent fighting figures. Of the eight seals found in Circle A, six show bloodthirsty scenes.⁵⁹ In every case the moment chosen is the most violent, when the assailant presses his attack with a weapon that has just entered or is about to enter the victim. The powerful assailants all lean forward, throwing all their weight into the attack. Their victims do not yield gracefully, but react with stiff shock.

The more essential stylistic elements of the violent cup are missing from the Katsamba pyxis, but they are found on a Mycenaean pyxis from a chamber tomb in the Agora in Athens (Fig. 18).⁶⁰ The pyxis, which was found with pottery of the latter part of the Late Helladic IIIA:1 period, is carved with representations of savage griffins attacking deer. The scene is less dependent upon Minoan art than the Vapheio cup is, and shows the Mycenaean style in a purer form. In contrast to the Minoan pyxis from Katsamba, the scene is confined within double-edged borders, and as on the violent cup, the lower border has an extra molding, adding a sense of weight. The handles with holes for suspension consist of projecting lions and their prey, regularly spaced around the pyxis. Here, as on the violent cup, the surface was not treated continuously, but was arbitrarily

⁵⁰ The formulation of the scope and sense of this style was presented in an exhibition at the Asia House in New York in 1970; E. Bunker, et al., "Animal Style" *Art from East to West*, The Asia Society, Inc., n.p., 1970.

⁵¹ *Die minoische Kultur des alten Kreta*, Stuttgart, 1964, 333, n. 5 to chap. 15. The events of this time are controversial; the views of S. Hood, *The Minoans*, London, 1971, 58–60, and S. Alexiou, *Minoan Civilization*, Heraklion, 1969, 58–60, are followed here. The seals in question include *Palace of Minos*, iv, figs. 556, 558, and 559; *Corpus*, iv, No. 233, and *Corpus*, viii, No. 131.

⁵² S. Alexiou, *Ysterminoikoi Taphoi Limenos Knosou (Katsamba)*, Athens, 1967, frontis. and pls. 30–33; Alexiou, *Ancient Crete*, pl. 95.

⁵³ J. T. Hooker, "The Mycenaean Siege Rhyton and the Question of Egyptian Influence," *American Journal of Archaeology*, lxxi, 1967, 275, n. 44.

⁵⁴ Evans, *Palace of Minos*, i, fig. 511. The repetition is exaggerated by the restoration procedure, which uses the preserved figures to complete the fragmentary ones.

⁵⁵ Evans, *Palace of Minos*, i, 689, figs. 509–10; iv, 600, fig. 595; C. Zervos, *L'art de la Crète*, Paris, 1956, pl. 480; Warren, *Minoan Stone Vases*, 85, P 472 and P 475; J. L. Benson, "A New Boxer Rhyton Fragment," *Boston Museum Bulletin*, lxxiv, 1966, No. 335, 36–40.

⁵⁶ The fighters on the top register are shown in a different profile position, but one has no opponent and the other is spaced too far from his already fallen opponent to be connecting a blow.

⁵⁷ Marinatos, *Thera*, iv, pls. D–F.

⁵⁸ I am grateful to E. Harrison for this observation.

⁵⁹ *Corpus*, i, Nos. 9–12, 15, and 16.

⁶⁰ T. Shear, "Excavations in the Athenian Agora," *Hesperia*, ix, 1940, 283–87; Vermeule, *Greece in the Bronze Age*, 219, figs. 160–61; S. Immerwahr, *The Neolithic and Bronze Ages, Agora XIII*, Princeton, 1971, pl. 32. The Mycenaean style of the pyxis is discussed by H. Kantor, "Ivory Carving in the Mycenaean Period," *Archaeology*, xiii, 1960, 15–17.

divided along an imaginary vertical and treated like a panel. As a result, as the excavator has noted, the representation can be much better appreciated in the spread-out drawing by Piet de Jong than on the pyxis itself.

The major elements of the composition are the large figures of two griffins which attack with opposing thrusts. One swoops up to the left and one down to the right from the imaginery division, which provides the necessary fixed point for the thrusts. This arrangement is similar to that of the two bulls thrusting outward from the central fixed point on the violent cup. Like the charging bull on the Vapheio cup, each of the griffins attacks two victims at once. The right-handed griffin's victim is placed vertically, so that the griffin appears to collide with it, at a point exactly midway between the two lion handles. The strict conformation of the griffin's tail with the regular curve of its wing, and the vertical alignment of the other griffin's wing with the deer handle further reveal the Mycenaean taste for geometry, a taste that also dictated the stricter space-filling on the pyxis. There is no sense whatsoever of naturalistic landscape setting. Little piles of rocks are scattered throughout, but merely as fillers of the surface, with no development of space. And like the bulls on the violent cup, the bodies of the figures are all subdivided by overlapping parts. This overlapping does not locate the figures in space, but serves to connect them in a continuous linear system that affirms the surface. The hindquarters of the little faun leaping over the pile of rocks disappear behind the antlers of one of the deer so that its body can continue their line; this device is analogous to the overlapped hindquarters of the charging bull on the Vapheio cup. In both cases the organic depiction of the animals is sacrificed to the abstract linear arrangement.

The organic depiction is also sacrificed for expressive aims. The tiny tree at the bottom, forced to the ground by the sweep of the onrushing griffin, serves only to underscore his power and enormous size – a more extreme case of the expressive use of the small trees on the violent Vapheio cup. All the victims have open mouths and jutting tongues to express their suffering, like the netted bull on the Vapheio cup. On the lid of the pyxis (Fig. 23), another griffin attacks two stags at once. The victims are constrained by the circular border into contorted positions like that of the netted bull on the Vapheio cup, although the attacker's wings cut through the same border to emphasize its power. With its "controlled organization of savagery and agony"⁶¹ the pyxis provides the true stylistic parallel to the violent Vapheio cup.

One of the Vapheio cups is clearly Minoan and the other clearly Mycenaean, yet on the surface they are so similar that they have been generally seen as products of the same artist.

The reason is that the Mycenaean artist has deliberately set out to imitate the Cretan cup and to produce a counterpart to it, executed in the Cretan manner. This circumstance is especially interesting because it provides a specific illustration of the wholesale borrowing from Crete that characterizes Mycenaean art of the Late Helladic II period.⁶² The Mycenaean artist has followed his Cretan model closely for the type and dimensions of the cup, for the method of manufacture of the spool handle and separate inner lining, for the three-scene format with a bull featured in each scene, and for the specific naturalistic forms of the figures and their setting. The two men on the violent cup have long hair and Minoan loincloths, which must have clearly identified them as Minoans. Their risky attempts to capture the dangerous bulls without the aid of weapons suggest that this is no ordinary hunt, but rather a roundup of bulls for ritual purposes, perhaps for the bull-leaping.⁶³ If so, the subject may be the same as that of the quiet cup. Instead, however, of representing the capture by the subtle means of sex, the Mycenaean artist has substituted the adventure and excitement of overcoming the animals by force. In choosing this more sensational aspect of the bull-collecting, the Mycenaean goldsmith shows ambitions to surpass his Cretan model. Although his work does not come up to the technical standards of the quiet cup, with its elegant and polished forms, the ruder execution of the violent cup, with its flickering surfaces, maintains the greater energy of the artist's conception and is an integral part of his style.

Any speculation about the exact circumstances of the manufacture of the cups can be, of course, only guesswork. It may be significant, however, that so far only one gold vessel has ever been found in Crete. The cup, found in one of the "warrior graves" that suggest Greek occupation, is a very light one, and its gold is of a less pure alloy than that of the Mycenaean examples.⁶⁴ This fact suggests that gold cups were not usually made in Crete. It is likely, therefore, that the Minoan artist who made the quiet cup worked on the Greek Mainland, perhaps at Vapheio itself. The two Vapheio cups are the same color, and an analysis of the metal might prove that they were made from the same gold. It is not unreasonable to suppose that a Minoan artist emigrated to the Greek Mainland. Examples of works by Minoan artists made on the Mainland can be found as early as the period of Shaft Grave IV at Mycenae.⁶⁵

Although the Mycenaean artist directly imitated the Minoan cup, he has drawn on other elements of Minoan art for his representation. A fragment of a stone vessel from the "Unexplored Mansion" at Knossos proves that bull-catching by means of a net was depicted in Crete.⁶⁶ On it is preserved the stretched-out hind part of a bull leaping into a net that is striking in its resemblance to the one on the Vapheio cup:

⁶¹ Vermeule, *Greece in the Bronze Age*, 219.

⁶² Shear, "Minoan Influence," 47–64.

⁶³ Alexiou, *Taphoi*, 73; Hood, *Minoans*, 89; cf. F. Matz, in *Kretika Chronika*, xv–xvi, 1961–62, 219–220.

⁶⁴ Heraklion Museum 758. S. Hood, "Another warrior grave at Ayios Ioannis near Knossos," *Annual of the British School at Athens*, LI, 1956, pl. 13a,b; fig. 5. A gold vessel reportedly from Zakro, Alexiou, *Ancient Crete*, pl. 171 above, does not appear to be genuine. I am grateful to

Dr. Stylianos Alexiou of the Heraklion Museum for permission to examine it.

⁶⁵ For example, the lion hunt dagger and the inlaid electrum goblet, Athens Museum 390.

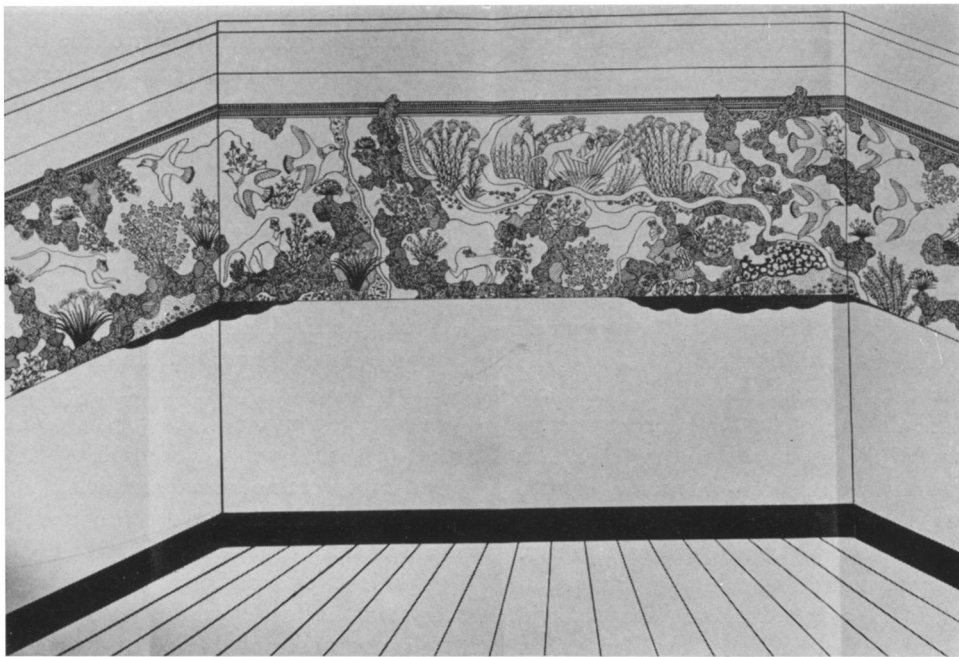
⁶⁶ *Bulletin de correspondance hellénique*, xciv, 1970, 1142–45, fig. 561. The fragment was found with Late Minoan IA pottery in a terrace, which was apparently constructed in Late Minoan II; *Archaeological Reports*, for 1968–69, 31–32.



20 View of handle, "Quiet" cup from Vapheio (courtesy I. Ioannidou)



21 View of handle, "Violent" cup from Vapheio (courtesy I. Ioannidou)



22 Knossos Reconstruction drawing of Bluebird Fresco (from Cameron, "Unpublished paintings," fig. 13)

both have twisted ropes set diagonally to the edge, with knotting where they criss-cross. On a gold seal from Rutsi,⁶⁷ a tiny bull-catcher is struggling to maneuver an enormous bull into a net. The delicate execution in smoothly rounded forms, the tiny dots of the hair and flowers, the granulation at the ends of the bead, and the working of the back suggest that the seal was made by a Minoan artist. Although only the forepart of this bull is snarled in the net, the representation has much in common with the netted bull on the Vapheio cup: the head of the bull is twisted around to bring

the horn next to the hind legs, the contortion is somewhat clarified by the twisting spine line, and the forelegs of the bull are shown jutting out through the net. The association of bull and net has a long history in Crete, and on a bull rhyton from the Mesara with human figures on the horns and a net pattern painted on the body, the motif is associated with bull-leaping.⁶⁸

The contorted position of the bull on the Vapheio cup, although more drastic than on the Rutsi seal, seems also to derive from Crete, where contorted animals go back to the

⁶⁷ *Corpus*, I, No. 274.

⁶⁸ S. Xanthoudides, *The Vaulted Tombs of Mesara*, London, 1924, 162, pl. xxxvii, No. 5052; Evans, *Palace of Minos*, I, 188–90, fig. 137a. Other bull rhyta with painted net patterns include a Middle Minoan IA

example from Mochlos, R. Seager, *Explorations in the Island of Mochlos*, Boston and New York, 1912, 60, fig. 29; a Late Minoan I example from Pseira, Marinatos, *Crete and Mycenae*, pl. 90 below; and a Late Minoan IA example from Thera, Marinatos, *Thera*, III, 54, pl. A,2.

Early Minoan II period.⁶⁹ The leaping bull on the Vapheio cup also has forerunners in Minoan art, where the “flying leap” is one posture among a variety that show animals in motion.⁷⁰ The powerful charging bull on the Vapheio cup turns his head to the side, the way bulls actually do when they charge, a motif not found in Minoan art. Although bulls occasionally turn their heads to the side in Minoan representations, they are not actually charging.⁷¹ The bull on the Vapheio cup is shown in mid-thrust with his forelegs up and the entire weight of his body thrown into the charge, conveying a momentum that is generally absent from Minoan examples. The best parallel for this more forceful representation is on a gem from Mycenae, where the bull’s head is turned in a three-quarters position.⁷²

Another Minoan motif is the man in mid-air with knees bent and arms outstretched behind his head. Evans pointed out its similarity to the falling man on the Lion Hunt Dagger from Shaft Grave IV (Fig. 16).⁷³ Although the use of *niello* and the lion hunt subject indicate that the dagger was made on the Mainland, its style is generally agreed to be Minoan. The scene is treated as a continuous frieze in the Minoan manner, with only the position of the attacking lion breaking the flow of the figures to the right. The curved forms of the slender figures, the deliberate variety in their postures and shields, and especially the way the figures have been choreographed to fit gracefully into the blade, all show the elegant Minoan taste. A comparison of the falling man with his counterpart on the Vapheio cup is instructive. The Vapheio figure falls more sharply, with the stiff line formed by his torso and arms (which form a ninety-degree angle with the figure on the horns) cutting into the terrain. The figure on the dagger with his more flexible arms has been smoothly adjusted to fit beneath the lion’s paws without bumping into anything. Grönewegen-Frankfort has noted that the falling man on the Vapheio cup reinforces the movement of the charging bull, and remarked that this contrasts with the usual Minoan tendency to balance movements within figures and groups.⁷⁴ On the dagger, the falling man does balance the movement of the lion, and at the same time serves as a typical Minoan element that intervenes between the attackers and their prey. The lions on the dagger illustrate Grönewegen-Frankfort’s observation very well; their tails curl forward to balance their movements except for the central lion whose turned head serves that function instead.

One striking feature of the Mainland Vapheio cup is the substitution of date palm trees for the olive trees of the Minoan cup. These may have a specifically symbolic reference, since the date palm is the traditional sacred tree of the Near East, and occurs in some Aegean representations in an undeniably sacred context.⁷⁵ The date palm is frequently shown on seals in specific association with bulls.⁷⁶ It is also possible, however, that the date palm had a particularly Cretan association for the Greeks on the Mainland, and that it is part of the deliberately Cretan vocabulary used on the cup. Palm trees appear frequently in Minoan art beginning with the first palace period, and Evans has surmised that the Minoans imported them and cultivated them in Crete.⁷⁷ Palm trees still grow wild there, with an especially famous large grove at Siteia. The Minoans represent palm trees very decoratively, however, and take great liberties with the natural forms. The lowest leaves often become volutes, or the palm elements are merged with lily elements.⁷⁸ The naturalism of the palms on the Vapheio cup goes far beyond that of any other extant Aegean representation. The Mainland artist renders accurately such characteristic details as the bark scarred by previous layers of leaves, the differentiation of the upright crown-shaft from the spreading leaves, the female flower stalk, the dying leaves hanging limply around the trunk, and two immature shoots or “suckers,” each growing next to a parent palm (Figs. 5 and 21).⁷⁹ He may follow an unusually naturalistic Minoan prototype, but it is also possible that he knew date palms first-hand. Could they have been newly cultivated in the southern Peloponnese at this time along with so many other elements of Minoan culture?

A minor technical distinction serves to confirm the attribution of the cups to two different cultures. The cups have similar spool handles, commonly called “Vapheio handles,” consisting of gold cylinders soldered between two horizontal strips of gold that are fastened with rivets⁸⁰ to the walls of the cup. But the lower attachment strips differ. On the quiet cup the strip is L-shaped, with distinct horizontal and vertical components, and is fastened low on the wall of the cup (Fig. 4). The strip on the violent cup forms a regular curve and is shorter and fastened higher on the wall (Fig. 7). It is surely no accident that the lower attachment strips on all the known Minoan versions of the spool handle match that of the quiet cup, while the short curved form finds parallels on the Mainland.

An explanation for the different forms of the handle

⁶⁹ *Corpus*, II, 1, Nos. 249, 252, 295; *Corpus*, II, 5, No. 283; A. Xenaki-Sakellariou, *Les cachets minoens de la collection Giamalakis*, Paris, 1958, No. 227, pls. VII, XXIV; *Annuario della R. Scuola archeologica di Atene*, VIII-IX, 1925–26, 104, No. 62.

⁷⁰ *Palace of Minos*, I, fig. 539c, d; *Monumenti Antichi*, XIV, 1904, 519, fig. 11, No. 15; cf. also the agrimi on the Sanctuary Rhyton.

⁷¹ *Annuario della R. Scuola archeologica di Atene*, VIII-IX, 1925–26, 120, No. 108, fig. 124, pl. XII. The lower position of the legs suggests the bull is balking rather than charging. On Heraklion Museum 613, *Archaiologike Ephemeris*, 1939–1941, 90, fig. 15, the bull is in flying gallop rather than charging.

⁷² *Corpus*, I, No. 152; the turn of the head can be seen on the impression, but not in the drawing.

⁷³ *Palace of Minos*, III, 181.

⁷⁴ *Arrest and Movement*, 199–200, 209.

⁷⁵ H. Danthine, *Le palmier-dattier et les arbres sacrés*, Paris, 1937, includes Aegean representations in the survey. Aegean representations are also collected by M. Nilsson, *The Minoan and Mycenaean Religion*, 2nd ed., Lund, 1950, 284–85, who is skeptical about the religious implications.

⁷⁶ *Corpus*, I, Nos. 52, 57, 88, 515.

⁷⁷ *Palace of Minos*, III, 177, n. 1; for representations: I, 254, fig. 190; 594, fig. 436c; II, 497, fig. 302.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, IV, 366–69.

⁷⁹ W. Schiering, “Goldbecher,” 6, has pointed out, however, the disproportionately large size of the limp leaves in comparison with the growing ones.

⁸⁰ The rivets also differ on the two cups: on the quiet cup the heads are decoratively rounded inside, as they are on all Minoan metal vessels of the late Palace period; while on the violent cup they are flat, as on the majority of Mainland cups.



23 Lid of Ivory Pyxis from the Agora, Athens (From *Hesperia*, ix, 1940, 287, fig. 28)

strip is offered by two silver cups of the Vapheio type from the Vapheio burial itself (Figs. 24–25). These were found, like the gold cups, one at each hand of the deceased. The two silver cups have the same decoration of tooled parallel bands around the rims, bases, and centers of the walls. They were originally described as exactly alike.⁸¹ However, one cup, Athens National Museum 1888 (Fig. 24), has an L-shaped lower attachment strip like the Minoan gold cup, while the other, Athens National Museum 1887 (Fig. 25), has a short curved strip like that of the Mycenaean gold cup. The silver cups, therefore, present a parallel to the two gold cups: a Minoan version and a Mycenaean imitation.⁸² On the Minoan cup, the lower strip is soldered rather than riveted to the wall. This technique accounts for the form of the L-shaped strip, which has more contact with the wall of the cup. The Mycenaean version, on the other hand, has the lower strip riveted on; its curved strip need touch the wall only where the rivet is fastened. The practice of soldering the strip could have dictated a conventional L-shape in Crete, even when the strip was riveted as on the gold cup. The silver cups show further differences in technique. The Minoan handle was cast in one piece, while on the Mainland version, the spool and strips were formed separately and the pieces rather clumsily riveted together. The Minoan cup is made of thicker plate than the Mainland cup, the wall is more regularly curved, and the rim is thickened and

rounded. These differences in technique indicate that the Mycenaean silversmith lacked the Minoan expertise.

The earliest extant spool handle occurs on a silver vessel from the Tod Treasure,⁸³ a cache of precious materials that was buried at the Montou sanctuary in Upper Egypt near Luxor in boxes bearing the cartouche of Amenemhat II (ca. 1929–1895 B.C.). The vessels in the Tod Treasure are probably not Minoan, but the spool handle is clearly a prototype of the handle later adopted by Minoan metal-workers. On the Tod cup the hollow spool of the handle is soldered to the two handle strips. Although both strips are riveted to the wall of the vessel, they are bent in distinct angles where they meet the wall and conform to its shape. Three Vapheio handles from Crete have L-shaped lower attachment strips:

Ashmolean Museum, AE 839. Clay goblet fragment from Knossos, dated late MM IIB or early MM IIIA. Imitated rivet heads on the upper surface of the top strip indicate a metal prototype.⁸⁴

Heraklion Museum 1574. Bronze “Vapheio” cup from Mochlos, from a MM III tomb. The handle with spool and strips was cast in one piece and riveted on.⁸⁵

Heraklion Museum 2098. Stone “Vapheio” cup from Knossos, found near the South House with LM IA pottery. The decoration with parallel horizontal bands at rim, base and center of the wall points to a metal prototype similar to the Minoan silver cup from Vapheio.⁸⁶

These three cups are the only examples from Crete known at the present time. A bronze “Vapheio” handle was found at Tylissos, but the attachment strips are not preserved.⁸⁷ A stone imitation of a “Vapheio” handle has been found at Zakros, but not yet published.⁸⁸ Further evidence is provided, however, by a pictogram on a Linear B tablet from Knossos that represents a “Vapheio” cup: the lower attachment strip of the spool handle has a distinct horizontal component.⁸⁹

On the other hand, some vessels from the Greek Mainland have spool handles like that of the violent cup with short, curved lower attachment strips:

Athens Museum 630. Gold “Vapheio” cup from Shaft Grave V, Mycenae.⁹⁰

Athens Museum 866. Silver “Vapheio” cup from Shaft Grave V, Mycenae.⁹¹

Athens Museum 412. Gold “Cup of Nestor” from Shaft Grave IV, Mycenae.⁹²

⁸¹ *Archaiologike Ephemeris*, 1889, 146–47.

⁸² Since the two silver cups were described as exactly alike, we do not know whether they were distributed as the gold cups were, with the Minoan example in the presumed left hand of the deceased, and the Mycenaean example in the presumed right hand. Such a distinction might have implications for the gems, most of which were also found in two groups corresponding to the cups.

⁸³ *Syria*, xviii, 1937, 174–82, fig. on page 180; F. Bisson de la Roque, et al., *Le Trésor de Tod*, Cairo, 1953, 24, pl. xxi, R. Higgins, *Minoan and Mycenaean Art*, New York and Washington, 1967, 39, fig. 31.

⁸⁴ Evans, *Palace of Minos*, I, fig. 183B, 1; iii, fig. 121.

⁸⁵ Seager, *Mochlos*, 62, fig. 31, No. xii, f.; Evans, *Palace of Minos*, II, fig. 288c; iii, fig. 122; Higgins, *Minoan and Mycenaean Art*, 39, fig. 31.

⁸⁶ Warren, *Minoan Stone Vases*, 40, D147, P236; Evans, *Palace of Minos*, II, fig. 212; Zervos, *Crète*, 388, fig. 567.

⁸⁷ *Archaiologike Ephemeris*, 1912, fig. 32.

⁸⁸ Noted by Warren, *Minoan Stone Vases*, 276, and N. Platon in *Praktika*, 1966, 252.

⁸⁹ Ashmolean Mus. AE 2031 = Knossos 872. M. Ventris and J. Chadwick *Documents in Mycenaean Greek*, Cambridge, 1959, 330, No. 231. Each transcription renders the handle somewhat differently; cf. Evans, *Palace of Minos*, II, fig. 336; E. L. Bennett, Jr., *Mycenaean Studies*, Madison, 1964, 259 (Sign 218).

⁹⁰ Karo, *Schachtgräber*, pl. cxxiii.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, pl. cxxiv.

⁹² *Ibid.*, pl. cix; Marinatos, *Crete and Mycenae*, pl. 188.



24 Silver cup from Vapheio. Athens, National Museum, 1888



25 Silver cup from Vapheio. Athens, National Museum, 1887

The gold “Vapheio” cup, Number 630, is much larger and taller than the Minoan cups, and the handle is smaller in relation to the rest of the cup. This tendency toward taller proportions also characterizes Mainland ceramic versions of the “Vapheio” cup, in comparison with Minoan ceramic examples.⁹³ Although the difference is much slighter, taller proportions also distinguish the violent Vapheio cup from the quiet cup.⁹⁴ The above list does not include Athens Museum Number 390, an inlaid electrum goblet from Shaft Grave IV, Mycenae.⁹⁵ The goblet appears to have been made by a Minoan artist working on the Greek Mainland, since its shape combines Minoan and Mycenaean elements. The regularly curved lower attachment strip of the spool handle may be one of the Mycenaean elements.

As might be expected, a number of cups with “Vapheio” handles found on the Greek Mainland have L-shaped attachment strips fastened low on the wall of the cup, like the two Minoan cups from Vapheio. This suggests that they too were of Minoan manufacture:⁹⁶

Athens Museum 755. Silver “Vapheio” cup from Shaft Grave V, Mycenae.⁹⁷

Athens Museum 7340. Silver “Vapheio” cup with bulls

in repoussé relief and gold inner lining, from the king’s burial at Midea Dendra.⁹⁸

Nauplia Museum, uncatalogued. Inlaid silver “Vapheio” cup from Midea Dendra, fragmentary, found outside Tomb 12.⁹⁹

The suggestion that these cups were Minoan-made is borne out by their other features. The silver cup from Shaft Grave V has precisely incurved sides like the Minoan silver cup from Vapheio and short wide proportions with the handle fastened low on the wall like the Mochlos bronze example. The gold-lined cup from Midea is very similar to the quiet cup from Vapheio with its decoration of bulls in repoussé relief and its separate inner lining. Also, as on the quiet cup, its handle was set right over the body of one of the running bulls. The inlaid cup from Midea is almost identical in its decoration to an inlaid bronze cup of “Vapheio” shape in London that is reported to come from Crete.¹⁰⁰ Therefore, the distinction between two forms of attachment strip provides a reasonable and consistent clue to the place of origin of the vessels.

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⁹³ Blegen, *Prosymna*, 395.

⁹⁴ Measurements from Müller, “Frühmykenische Reliefs,” 328, n. 2:

	Height	Upper diameter
Violent cup	8.4cm	10.2–10.3cm
Quiet cup	7.8–7.9cm	10.6–10.7cm

⁹⁵ Karo, *Schachtgräber*, pls. cxii, cxiii; Marinatos, *Crete and Mycenae*, pl. 186.

⁹⁶ An additional example from Shaft Grave IV, Mycenae, Athens Museum 517, 476, Karo, *Schachtgräber*, pls. cxxvii and cxxxiii, was restored from two fragments with the juncture at the lower handle strip. It may belong to this category, although the poor condition prevents a certain judgment.

⁹⁷ Karo, *Schachtgräber*, pl. cxxiii.

⁹⁸ A. Persson, *The Royal Tombs at Dendra near Midea*, Lund, 1931, pls. II, xvi.

⁹⁹ *Mitteilungen des deutschen archäologischen Instituts, Athenische Abteilung*, LXXXII, 1967, 52–53, fig. 13, Suppl. 30, 1–2, 31, 1. The restoration drawing should be corrected in that the lower attachment strip indicates a distinct horizontal component, and the preserved lower rivet indicates that the handle was fastened low on the wall. I am grateful to Mr. C. Kritzas of the Nauplia Museum for allowing me to examine the fragments.

¹⁰⁰ The cup, in a private collection in London, is unpublished but noted by Higgins, *Minoan and Mycenaean Art*, 150. I am grateful to Dr. Higgins for allowing me to examine the cup.